

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An optical displacement sensor comprising:
 - a surface emitting laser light source for emitting a light beam having a predetermined shape;
 - 5 a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross said light beam emitted from said surface emitting laser light source and having a diffraction grating of a predetermined period for forming a diffraction interference pattern from said light beam; and
 - 10 a photosensor for receiving a predetermined portion of said diffraction interference pattern, said photosensor including light intensity detecting means comprised of a plurality of light receiving areas arranged apart from one another in a pitch direction of said diffraction interference pattern on a light receiving surface at intervals of $n p_1(z_1+z_2)/z_1$ where z_1 is a distance between a light-beam emitting surface of said surface emitting laser light source and a surface on which said diffraction grating is formed;
 - 15 z_2 is a distance between said surface on which said diffraction grating is formed and said light receiving surface of said photosensor;
 - 20 p_1 is a pitch of said diffraction grating on said scale; and
 - 25 n is a natural number.
2. The optical displacement sensor according to claim 1, wherein said photosensor has second light

intensity detecting means having an output terminal independent from that of said light intensity detecting means, and

5 said second light intensity detecting means has a light receiving width of $mp_1(z_1+z_2)/z_1$ in said pitch direction of said diffraction interference pattern on said light receiving surface where m is a second natural number which can be set independently of said natural number n.

10 3. An optical displacement sensor comprising:
 a light source for emitting coherent light;
 a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross
 a light beam as said coherent light emitted from said
 light source and having a diffraction grating of
15 a predetermined period for forming a diffraction
 interference pattern from said light beam; and
 a photosensor for receiving a predetermined
 portion of said diffraction interference pattern,

20 whereby a principal axis of said light beam as
 said coherent light emitted from said light source
 is tilted in a predetermined direction to a line
 perpendicular to that surface of said scale on which
 said light beam is irradiated.

25 4. An optical displacement sensor capable of
 detecting displacement of a scale, comprising:
 a scale freely movable in a predetermined
 direction and having a diffraction grating of a

predetermined period provided in the same direction as the predetermined direction;

5 a surface emitting laser light source for irradiating a light beam approximately perpendicularly to the diffraction grating of the scale; and

10 a photosensor for detecting the light beam from the surface emitting laser light source which has passed through the diffraction grating of the scale, the photosensor having a plurality of light intensity detecting means aligned on a light detecting surface in the same direction as the pitch direction of the diffraction grating.

15 5. An optical displacement sensor according to claim 4, wherein the arrangement of the plurality of light intensity detecting means satisfies the following condition:

$$p_2 = n p_1 (z_1 + z_2) / z_1$$

20 where n is a voluntary natural number, p_1 is the pitch interval of the diffraction grating, z_1 is the distance between the light emitting surface of the surface emitting laser light source and the diffraction grating of the scale, and z_2 is the distance between the diffraction grating of the scale and the light detecting surface of the photosensor.

25 6. An optical displacement sensor comprising:

a surface emitting laser light source for emitting a light beam having a predetermined shape;

a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross
the light beam emitted from the surface emitting laser
light source and having a diffraction grating of a
predetermined period formed thereon for forming a
5 diffraction interference pattern from the light beam;
and

10 a photosensor for receiving a predetermined
portion of the diffraction interference pattern,
characterized in that the light beam from the surface
emitting laser light source has a beam size of 3 μm
15 or larger on the light emitting surface with respect
to the pitch direction of the diffraction grating.

7. An optical displacement sensor capable of
detecting displacement of a scale, comprising:

15 a scale freely movable in a predetermined
direction and having a diffraction grating of a prede-
termined period provided in the same direction as the
predetermined direction;

20 a surface emitting laser light source for
irradiating a light beam approximately perpendicularly
to the diffraction grating of the scale; and

25 a photosensor for detecting the light beam from
the surface emitting laser light source which has
passed through the diffraction grating of the scale,
characterized in that the light beam from the surface
emitting laser light source has a beam size of 3 μm
or larger on the light emitting surface in the same

direction as the pitch direction of the diffraction grating of the scale.

8. An optical displacement sensor according to claim 4, wherein the photosensor further includes 5 second light intensity detecting means on the light detecting surface, and

the output of this second light intensity detecting means can be processed independently of the outputs of the plurality of light intensity detecting 10 means.

9. An optical displacement sensor according to claim 8, wherein one or a plurality of second light intensity detecting means are provided, and a length in the same direction as the pitch direction of the diffraction grating of the scale is approximately equal 15 to $m p_1(z_1+z_2)/z_1$, where m is any natural number, p_1 is the pitch interval of the diffraction grating, z_1 is the distance between the light emitting surface of the surface emitting laser light source and the diffraction grating of the scale, and z_2 is the distance between 20 the diffraction grating of the scale and the light detecting surface of the photosensor.

10. An optical displacement sensor according to claim 4, wherein the light intensity detecting means 25 are aligned in plural columns.

11. An optical displacement sensor according to claim 10, wherein the individual columns of the light

intensity detecting means in the photosensor have the same pitch, and are shifted from one another by a predetermined amount.

12. An optical displacement sensor according
5 to claim 11, wherein the amount of the positional deviation is an odd multiple of 1/4 of the pitch of the columns.

13. An optical displacement sensor according to
claim 4, wherein the light intensity detecting means
10 in the photosensor are separated into a plurality of groups which can provide outputs independently, and those light intensity detecting means in each group are alternately laid out.

14. An optical displacement sensor according to
15 claim 13, wherein those light intensity detecting means in each group which are alternately laid out have the same pitch and the position deviation between those light intensity detecting means which belong to different groups is an odd multiple of 1/4 of the aforementioned pitch.

15. An optical displacement sensor comprising:
a surface emitting laser light source for emitting
a light beam having a predetermined shape;
a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross
25 the light beam emitted from the surface emitting laser light source and having a diffraction grating of a predetermined period for forming a diffraction

interference pattern from the light beam; and
a photosensor for receiving a predetermined
portion of the diffraction interference pattern,
characterized in that

5 the surface emitting laser light source irradiates
a plurality of light beams on the scale, and
the photosensor is comprised of a plurality of
light intensity detecting means for selectively
receiving individual diffraction interference patterns
10 generated by the plurality of light beams.

16. An optical displacement sensor capable of
detecting displacement of a scale, comprising:

15 a scale freely movable in a predetermined
direction and having a diffraction grating of a prede-
termined period provided in the same direction as the
predetermined direction;

20 a surface emitting laser light source for
irradiating a light beam approximately perpendicularly
to the diffraction grating of the scale; and

25 a photosensor for detecting the light beam from
the surface emitting laser light source which has
passed through the diffraction grating of the scale,
characterized in that the photosensor can detect
displacement of each diffraction pattern formed on the
light receiving surface as the plurality of light beams
are irradiated on the diffraction grating.

17. An optical displacement sensor comprising:

a surface emitting laser light source for emitting a light beam having a predetermined shape;

5 a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross the light beam emitted from the surface emitting laser light source and having a diffraction grating of a predetermined period formed thereon for forming a diffraction interference pattern from the light beam; and

10 a photosensor for receiving a predetermined portion of the diffraction interference pattern, characterized in that

the scale has a plurality of diffraction grating areas having predetermined spatial phases different from one another,

15 the surface emitting laser light source irradiates independent light beams on the plurality of diffraction grating areas of the scale, and

20 the photosensor is comprised of a plurality of light intensity detecting means for respectively and selectively receiving the diffraction interference patterns generated by the plurality of diffraction grating areas.

18. An optical displacement sensor capable of detecting displacement of a scale, comprising:

25 a scale freely movable in a predetermined direction and having a plurality of diffraction gratings provided at a predetermined period in the same

pitch direction as the predetermined direction;
a surface emitting laser light source for
irradiating a light beam approximately perpendicularly
to each diffraction grating of the scale; and

5 a photosensor for detecting the light beam from
the surface emitting laser light source which has
passed through the diffraction grating of the scale,
characterized in that

10 the photosensor can detect displacement of each
diffraction pattern formed on the light receiving
surface as the plurality of light beams are irradiated
on the respective diffraction gratings.

19. An optical displacement sensor capable of
detecting displacement of a scale, comprising:

15 a scale freely movable in a predetermined
direction and having a diffraction grating of a
predetermined period provided in the same pitch
direction as the predetermined direction;

20 a coherent light source for irradiating a light
beam to the diffraction grating of the scale; and

a photosensor for selectively detecting a specific
portion of the light beam from the coherent light
source which has been diffracted by the diffraction
grating of the scale, characterized in that

25 the principal axis of the light beam from the
coherent light source is tilted in a predetermined
direction to a line perpendicular to the surface of the

diffraction grating.

20. An optical displacement sensor according to
claim 19, wherein the pitch direction of the diffrac-
tion grating formed on the scale and the principal axis
5 of the light beam from the coherent light source which
emits the coherent light are arranged perpendicular to
each other, and

the surface where the diffraction grating of the
scale is formed is set in parallel to the light
10 receiving surface of the photosensor.

21. An optical displacement sensor according to
claim 19, wherein the pitch direction of the diffrac-
tion grating is perpendicular to the principal axis of
the light beam from the coherent light source and the
15 surface of the diffraction grating is parallel to the
light receiving surface of the photosensor.

22. An optical displacement sensor comprising:
a light source for emitting coherent light;
a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross
20 a light beam as the coherent light emitted from the
light source and having a diffraction grating of
a predetermined period for forming a diffraction
interference pattern from the light beam; and
a photosensor for receiving a predetermined
portion of the diffraction interference pattern,
25 whereby a principal axis of the light beam as the
coherent light emitted from the light source is tilted

in a predetermined direction to a line perpendicular to that surface of the scale on which the light beam is irradiated.

23. An optical displacement sensor according to
5 claim 22, wherein the pitch direction of the
diffraction grating formed on the scale is arranged
perpendicular to the principal axis of the light beam
from the light source that emits coherent light, and
the plane where the diffraction grating of the
10 scale is formed is arranged in parallel to the light
receiving surface of the photosensor.

24. An optical displacement sensor comprising:
a light source for emitting coherent light;
a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross
15 a light beam as the coherent light emitted from the
light source and having a diffraction grating of
a predetermined period for forming a diffraction
interference pattern from the light beam; and
a photosensor for receiving a predetermined
portion of the diffraction interference pattern,
20 wherein the light source and the photosensor are
arranged on the same side with respect to the scale,
and
the plane where the diffraction grating of the
25 scale is formed is arranged perpendicular to the
principal axis of the light beam to be emitted from
the light source that emits the coherent light.

25. An optical displacement sensor capable of detecting displacement of a scale, comprising:

a scale freely movable in a predetermined direction and having a diffraction grating of a predetermined period provided in the same pitch direction as the predetermined direction;

5 a surface emitting laser light source for irradiating a light beam approximately perpendicular to the diffraction grating of the scale; and

10 a photosensor for detecting the light beam from the surface emitting laser light source which has passed through the diffraction grating of the scale.

26. An optical displacement sensor comprising:

a surface emitting laser light source for emitting 15 a light beam having a predetermined shape;

a scale displaceable in such a manner as to cross the light beam emitted from the surface emitting laser light source and having a diffraction grating of a predetermined period for forming a diffraction 20 interference pattern from the light beam; and

a photosensor for receiving a predetermined portion of the diffraction interference pattern.

27. An optical encoder comprising:

a coherent light source;

25 a scale movably supported and formed with a first scale pattern and a second scale pattern for reflecting or diffracting and passing a light beam from said

coherent light source;

a beam-splitting optical element, provided between said coherent light source and said scale, for splitting said light beam emitted from said coherent light source into a plurality of beams;

5 first and second photosensors for detecting said light beams split by said beam-splitting optical element,

10 said first photosensor having a plurality of light receiving areas formed at intervals of approximately $n p_{11} (z_{11} + z_{21}) / z_{11}$ in a spatial period direction of a diffraction interference pattern formed on a light receiving surface as a first light beam split by said beam-splitting optical element is optically affected said first scale pattern, where z_{11} is an optical distance along a principal axis of said first light beam from a beam emitting surface of said coherent light source to a surface where said first scale pattern is formed, z_{21} is an optical distance along 15 said principal axis of said first light beam to said first photosensor from said surface where said first scale pattern is formed to said first photosensor, p_{11} is a spatial period of said first scale pattern and n is a natural number,

20 25 a second light beam among said plurality of light beams split by said beam-splitting optical element being optically affected said second scale pattern and

being then received by said second photosensor.

28. The optical encoder according to claim 27,
further comprising:

5 a first optical beam-bending element provided
between said scale and said first photosensor; and

a second optical beam-bending element provided
between said scale and said second photosensor,

whereby said first and second light beams which
have been optically affected said first scale pattern
10 and said second scale pattern pass through said second
and third beam-splitting optical elements to be
received by said first and second photosensors,
respectively.

29. An optical encoder comprising:

15 a coherent light source;

a scale movably supported and formed with a first
scale pattern and a second scale pattern for reflecting
or diffracting and passing a light beam from said
coherent light source;

20 a beam-splitting optical element, provided between
said coherent light source and said scale, for
splitting said light beam emitted from said coherent
light source into a plurality of beams;

25 first and second photosensors for detecting said
light beams split by said beam-splitting optical
element,

said first photosensor having a plurality of light

receiving areas formed at intervals of approximately
np11(z11+z21)/z11 in a spatial period direction of
a diffraction interference pattern formed on a light
receiving surface as a first light beam split by
5 said beam-splitting optical element is optically
affected said first scale pattern, where z11 is an
optical distance along a principal axis of said first
light beam from a beam emitting surface of said
coherent light source to a surface where said first
10 scale pattern is formed, z21 is an optical distance
along said principal axis of said first light beam to
said first photosensor from said surface where said
first scale pattern is formed to said first
photosensor, p11 is a spatial period of said first
15 scale pattern and n is a natural number,

a second light beam among said plurality of light
beams split by said beam-splitting optical element
being received by said second photosensor without being
irradiated on any scale pattern.

20 30. An optical encoder according to claim 27,
wherein the beam-splitting optical element is disposed
in such a way as to include the principal axis of the
light beam immediately after it has been emitted from
the coherent light source and to split the principal
axis of the light beam into a plurality of directions
25 only in the plane perpendicular to the pitch direction
of the first scale pattern.

31. An optical encoder according to claim 27, wherein the second scale pattern has a uniform reflectance, transmissivity or diffraction efficiency.

32. An optical encoder according to claim 27, 5 wherein given that the second scale pattern has a predetermined period p_1 different from that of the first scale pattern, the second photosensor has a plurality of light receiving areas formed at intervals of approximately $np_{12}(z_{12}+z_{22})/z_{12}$ in the spatial period direction of the diffraction interference pattern, where z_{12} is an optical distance measured along the principal axis of the second light beam that extends from the beam emitting surface of the coherent light source to the surface where the second scale 10 pattern is formed, and z_{22} is an optical distance measured along the principal axis of the second light beam and extending to the light receiving surface of the second photosensor from the surface where the second scale pattern is formed.

33. An optical encoder according to claim 27, 20 wherein the second scale pattern is a single scale pattern or a plurality of scale patterns formed at a predetermined reference position.

34. An optical encoder according to claim 28, 25 wherein the first, second and third beam-splitting optical element and the first and second optical beam-bending elements are disposed in such a way as

to include the principal axis of the light beam
immediately after it has been emitted from the coherent
light source and to split the principal axis of the
light beam into a plurality of directions only in the
5 plane perpendicular to the pitch direction of the first
scale pattern.

35. An optical encoder according to claim 28,
wherein the second scale pattern has a uniform
reflectance, transmissivity or diffraction efficiency.

10 36. An optical encoder according to claim 28,
wherein given that the second scale pattern has a
predetermined period p_1 different from that of the
first scale pattern, the second photosensor receives
the diffraction interference pattern produced by the
15 second scale pattern through a beam-splitting optical
element the same as or separate from the first beam-
splitting optical element and has a plurality of light
receiving areas formed at intervals of approximately
 $np_{12}(z_{12}+z_{22})/z_{12}$ in the spatial period direction of
the diffraction interference pattern, where z_{12} is
20 an optical distance measured along the principal axis
of the second light beam that extends from the beam
emitting surface of the coherent light source to the
surface where the second scale pattern is formed, and
25 z_{22} is an optical distance measured along the principal
axis of the second light beam and extending to the
light receiving surface of the second photosensor from

the surface where the second scale pattern is formed.

37. An optical encoder according to claim 28,
wherein the second scale pattern is a single scale
pattern or a plurality of scale patterns formed at
5 a predetermined reference position.

38. An optical encoder comprising:

a coherent light source capable of emitting a
plurality of light beams;

10 a scale displaceable in such a way as to cross the
light beams emitted from the coherent light source and
formed with a first scale pattern of a predetermined
period for generating a diffraction interference
pattern from a first light beam emitted from the
coherent light source; and

15 a first photosensor for receiving the diffraction
interference pattern, the first photosensor having a
plurality of light receiving areas formed at intervals
of approximately $n\lambda_1(z_{11}+z_{21})/z_{11}$ in the spatial
period direction of the diffraction interference
20 pattern so as to receive a predetermined portion of
the diffraction interference pattern, where z_{11} is
an optical distance measured along the principal axis
of the first light beam that extends from the beam
emitting surface of the coherent light source to the
25 surface where the second scale pattern is formed, z_{21}
is an optical distance measured along the principal
axis of the first light beam and extending to the light

receiving surface of the first photosensor from the surface where the second scale pattern is formed, p_{11} is the spatial period of the first scale pattern and n is a natural number,